

**- Hall's Bill (H.R. 5892) Passes House as Amendment Senate Omnibus Bill -  
- Hall Provisions Likely to Become Law -**

Washington, DC – Last night, U.S. Rep. John Hall's landmark legislation to overhaul the VA's disability claims bureaucracy passed the House as part of a comprehensive Senate veterans' omnibus bill. Because the Senate more commonly uses the vehicle of larger, omnibus bills to pass legislation through its chamber, all of the provisions of Congressman Hall's Veterans Disability Benefits Claims Modernization Act of 2008 (HR 5892) were rolled into S. 3023, the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act.

"Senator Clinton and I have been fighting tirelessly to get this crucial legislation to become law before Congress adjourns," said Congressman Hall, chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. "Veterans cannot afford to wait any longer. Last night's vote clears another important hurdle toward achieving this goal."

All provisions of Hall's Veterans Disability Claims Modernization Act (H.R. 5892) were included in full in the Senate's omnibus bill. The larger Senate bill passed the House including Hall's bill and is now awaiting passage in the Senate. The Senate is expected to pass the legislation and the White House has indicated its support of Hall's bill.

"This legislation truly came as the result of the tireless work of veterans and their families to finally receive the treatment and benefits they deserve," said Hall. "Over the past two years, hundreds of veterans have contacted my office seeking help with their long-overdue claims. They told stories of waiting months and years to receive the benefits they earned by their selfless sacrifice. Instead of promptly being granted what they were owed, they were given the run around by a Veterans Administration plagued by archaic processing systems and a lack of accountability."

Over the last year, Hall chaired a series of hearings by his subcommittee in Washington, DC, and a field hearing last October in New Windsor about the claims backlog. With the information obtained during these hearings and from meetings with countless veterans, Hall wrote the Veterans Disability Benefits Claims Modernization Act. The House originally passed Hall's bill unanimously by a vote of 429-0 on July 30, and Senators Hillary Clinton and Chuck Schumer introduced a companion bill in the Senate.

Currently, disabled veterans suffering from combat wounds are faced with an adversarial claims processing system as well as an average six-month wait before receiving assistance. Many veterans or their surviving spouses or families are forced to wait for years, and in some cases decades, for the VA to accept their disability pension claims.

Hall's legislation, the Disability Claims Modernization Act, would make several sweeping changes to the way the VA processes disability claims so that injured veterans can get the benefits they are owed easier. A veteran's disability claim first has to be approved before a veteran may receive a monthly pension and expanded access to VA health care.

"This legislation comprehensively modernizes the Veterans Benefits Administration and make it more accountable," said Hall. "Once fully implemented, this bill will help the VA become a 21st

century, world-class entity that fulfills its purpose of serving our veterans, their families, and survivors."

"This is the next critical step on the road to streamlining the VA benefits system," said Senator Clinton. "These brave men and women have selflessly sacrificed in defense of our nation, and they should not be forced to wade through an outmoded system in order to receive the benefits befitting their service. I thank Congressman Hall for his leadership on this issue, and I will continue to work in the Senate to do all I can to provide our veterans with a system that works for them, not against them."

The White House Domestic Policy Office expressed their interest in the bill as "good government" and its deference to recommendations by the Veteran's Disability Benefits Commission and the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. Additionally, the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), The American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), AMVETS, National Veterans Legal Service Program, National Organization of Veterans Advocates, Vietnam Veterans of America, National Association for Uniformed Services, The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA), and the American Federation of Government Employees have all sent letters in support of The Veterans Disability Benefits Claims Modernization Act of 2008.